

Gil Coleman

Gil Coleman compiled a 92-64 record as Central Washington University's men's basketball coach before his career was cut short in 1995 at the age of 38 when he died due to complications resulting from a bone marrow transplant.

In just five seasons, he led CWU to two titles and won three NAIA District 1 or Pacific Northwest Athletic Conference Coach-of-the-Year awards.

He replaced the legendary Dean Nicholson following the 1990 season and led CWU to records of 14-14 and 19-13 in his first two seasons before guiding the Wildcats to a 29-7 record and the NAIA District 1 title in 1993. CWU then divided a pair of games at the national tournament, defeating Central Arkansas before losing to Midwestern State (Tex) in the second round.

Following a 12-17 record in 1994, CWU bounced back to win 20 of 34 games in 1995 and the first of three Pacific Northwest Athletic Conference titles in the four-year history of the conference.

Coleman died the day before the conference championship game, but his team, in perhaps the most emotional game in school history, defeated Lewis-Clark State 77-60, then won one of two games at the national tournament in Kansas City under the direction of Greg Sparling.

Coleman, a 1981 graduate of CWU, was an assistant under Nicholson in the 1989-90 season prior to taking over as head coach. Previously he had been a highly successful high school coach at Onalaska and Juanita High School in Kirkland.

At Onalaska, he compiled a 60-12 record in three seasons and his 1983 team won the State Class B title, posting a perfect record of 28-0. That team was led by Ron vanderSchaaf, who went on to earn All-American honors at CWU and was drafted by the Los Angeles Lakers following the 1987 season.

Coleman then compiled an 83-43 record in five seasons at Juanita prior to returning to Ellensburg as an assistant coach. His 1988 Juanita team placed fifth in the State AAA tournament and his 1989 squad also qualified for the event. In eight seasons at the high school level, he compiled a record of 143-55 and won six league titles.

Coleman was a 1974 graduate of Morton High School where he lettered in basketball and cross country. He was the team captain in basketball and helped Morton earn three trips to the Class State A tournament. He ran the 800 and 1600 meters and was also the team captain in track.

Coleman then played basketball at Sheldon Jackson College in 1978 and was voted the team captain. Later he earned a B.A. degree in education and social science from CWU in 1981 and a MS in athletic administration in 1991.

In addition to coaching basketball for five seasons at CWU, he also served the university as its women's head cross country coach for one year.